

**REMARKS OF COLLEEN A. PRESTON, DUSD(AR)  
HEROES OF REINVENTION “HAMMER” AWARD CEREMONY  
SEPTEMBER 20, 1996**

Dr. Perry, Dr. Kaminski, other distinguished guests and honorees. First, I would like to just say thank you to the team of people who put this event together. It seems, in scope to almost rival one of our largest military campaigns in terms of the administrative and logistics efforts required.

This is by far the greatest day of my tenure as the Deputy Undersecretary for Acquisition Reform. I have been involved in the federal acquisition process as a government employee almost 20 years now. I believe it is safe to say that this is hardly what I would have expected to be doing when I graduated from law school some many years ago. In fact, when I came over to the Department of Defense with former Secretary Les Aspin in 1993, acquisition reform was not what I expected to do.

But then I met again an individual that I knew was serious about revolutionizing the acquisition process – Secretary Bill Perry, and another individual who was as committed to the cause as he – the former Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, now Director of the CIA, the Honorable John Deutch.

And, despite the admonitions of many who said that this was a thankless task to take on, and that so many had tried and not succeeded, why would anyone want to do this, I decided that the leadership we had would make this come true.

The organization that I lead – what I like to call “TEAM AR,” is small, overworked, and populated by the most dedicated and professional individuals I have ever known in my life, whether permanent staff, or what some of them like to refer to themselves as – our migrant workers.

But it doesn't stop with TEAM AR – it extends to every individual here in this hall.

The acquisition reform process, within DoD, or any of the other federal agencies represented here, has not been easy. We've had our share of naysayers, and perhaps worst, the closest non-believers – who thought this fad would fade, like many others.

They will never know however, what it feels like to be a part of a great leadership team -- what it is to see a President and Vice-President speak at length a number of times about the acquisition process. That has to be a historical first. I've known of no other President or Vice-President to speak about the acquisition process in such detail. We should be very, very, proud to be a part of something that is so important to our leadership. To be a part of a leadership team within DoD and throughout the federal government, led by the Secretary of Defense, the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, the Principal Deputy, Noel Longuemare, the Component Acquisition Executives, the DoD and other agency procurement officials, and the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. And as well to have the support of Congress and members of their staff.

But most importantly, these naysayers have not had the pleasure, nor known the pride, and the joy that others and I have been fortunate enough to experience, watching our honorees in action --

- rewriting the federal acquisition regulations to implement all of the changes as a result of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act - changing two-thirds of the pages of the Federal Acquisition Regulations – more importantly, though, thinking “outside the box” – and taking whole new approaches to the procurement process
- our honorees who worked day and night to achieve consensus on Process Action Team recommendations, many of them here from out of town, and most, participating on these teams for two, three, and sometimes more months, while simultaneously many of them trying to do their regular jobs as well
- and they have not seen the persistence of the efforts of the working groups -- trying to achieve breakthroughs in thinking about problems and creating innovative solutions, day after day, week after week, like some of our working groups have.

Our honorees, as Secretary Perry has mentioned, have proven that removed from the shackles of a “rule bound” system, government employees are in fact the most innovative, the most knowledgeable about what needs to be done to change the system so they can do their job, and the most willing to work at change when given the chance.

This award ceremony is very important, because each of the honorees are receiving some small measure of the recognition they deserve as true Heroes of Reinvention. But it is also vitally important as a symbol of the leadership's adoption of a new way of doing business – listening to those most knowledgeable about the process, and then acting on their recommendations. If you leave here with only one thought today – I hope it will be that it is possible for one individual to make changes even within a huge bureaucracy like the federal government – and that, even better, with teamwork, common people can attain uncommon results.

On a personal note, as many of you have heard me say in speeches or presentations -- the DoD AR team that I lead are facilitators, and the world's best plagiarizers – because our goal in life is to take everyone else's great ideas and see if we can share them, or help get them implemented. I often feel, though, as a result, that, to paraphrase the song, many of you within the acquisition community have been standing in my shadow – I have the title – Acquisition Reform; you've been letting me take all the glory, when you are the ones with all the strength. I can only tell you with all my heart, there is nothing that means more to me than to hear someone say: “I've been trying to get this change through for over 20 years in my career with the federal government” and know that I was able to play some small part in helping you finally get that change adopted. No reward or recognition of any kind can mean any more than that.

There is no doubt that each of you here, and many others that have yet to be recognized, or may never be, have let me fly, so high that I have almost touched the sky. Thank you for being the “wind beneath my wings.”

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